



Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
30 Providence Road
Grafton, MA 01519

Meeting Minutes
Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
May 20, 2021

A meeting of the Grafton Affordable Housing Trust was held at 7:00 PM on May 20, 2021, via Zoom. In attendance were: Chair Bruce Spinney, Vice Chair and Treasurer Elisabeth Haynes, Clerk Dan Cusher, Ed Prisby, Eric Swenson, Curt Williams. Absent were: Dan Crossin. Guests in attendance were: Kathleen O'Donnell. Staff in attendance were: Chris McGoldrick (Town Planner).

1. Action Items

- a. Review and consider retaining Kathleen O'Donnell as AHT counsel
 - Bruce introduced Kathleen O'Donnell, a real estate attorney with expertise in affordable housing law, and said he thinks she'd be a good choice for our independent council for legal aspects of projects and to provide guidance.
 - Kathleen gave some more details about her experience. She lives in Milton and practices throughout the commonwealth. She represents 15 different Affordable Housing Trusts and assists with friendly 40B projects. She's familiar with Grafton and has "been there for many 40B hearings."
 - Dan Cusher asked what the ballpark cost estimate would be for 25 Worcester Street. Kathleen said her rate is \$150 per hour, and while it's hard to tell what the total will come out to depending on the specifics of the project, it would probably be around \$1,000 to \$1,500 covering a request for proposals for a developer, purchase and sale agreement, and a closing; Kathleen is doing that for another town and that's their ballpark range.
 - Bruce said it would be very helpful to have our own council to look at things, such as the 25 Worcester Street warrant article. He said that article will be thrown out anyway, but the Trust should get ahead of anything else that could happen.
 - Elisabeth asked whether individual trustees can submit questions to be answered during the process. Bruce said he would like to have Kathleen present at the Trust's monthly meetings, and if trustees came up with questions between meetings they should send them to the chair so that Kathleen's answer can be distributed to everyone. For comparison, Bruce noted that the Select Board would submit questions for Town Council through the Town Administrator, but the Trust doesn't have staff so going through the chair works best for the Trust.

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- **Ed moved to direct the chair to sign the retainer with Kathleen O'Donnell. Dan Cusher seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call.**
 - b. Review and consider retaining Jen Goldson as AHT consultant for project management and other duties
 - Bruce said he didn't get this done in time for this meeting, but it works out well because it would be good for our new council to look at it, so this will be brought back at a future meeting.
 - c. Consider associate position for administrative functions on behalf of the board
 - Bruce said the Planning Department will get an Assistant Town Planner in the FY22 budget, but the Finance Committee will also be looking for a replacement for their administrative assistant. Bruce met with the Town Administrator to see if the Trust could share a position with the Finance Committee: 19 hour per week total, no benefits, but someone more tailored to the 40B aspect, real estate, etc. Bruce just had that meeting this morning and wanted to get an impression from the trustees at this point. Bruce sent Groton's Housing Coordinator job description to the trustees, and Dan Cusher and Bruce have been working on scope as well.
 - Dan Cusher, who is also a member of the Finance Committee, said that the Finance Committee heard about this idea the night before from the Finance Committee chair, and the members were open to it.
 - d. Meeting Minutes
 - **Dan Cusher moved to accept the minutes from November 13, 2019, May 14, 2020, and April 5, 2021, as presented. Curt seconded, Motion passed unanimously by roll call.**
- 2. Discussion Items**
- a. Chairperson's role in public correspondence on projects
 - Bruce said he has been getting a lot of correspondence about 25 Worcester Street, and is being asked to attend meetings with neighbors in the area, including Ron Warwick, the lead petitioner for the invalid warrant article intending to take 25 Worcester Street back from the Trust. He's uncomfortable meeting with them without the Trust's knowledge and approval, so he wanted to discuss it at this meeting.
 - Elisabeth suggested that one other member could go with Bruce for transparency. Bruce said that sounds like a good idea, though once the Trust gets back to a regular meeting schedule it would be nice to get people to just come to the meetings.
 - Curt asked about the nature of the meeting with the neighbors. Bruce said he doesn't know the specifics, but they'll probably want to go over the plans in a more informal session. Bruce would be more than happy to discuss them live in a meeting but the project just isn't at that point yet. Bruce said some in the neighborhood have been a bit impatient with the pace, but the coordination takes a lot of time and the Trust doesn't have anyone in staff dedicated to the Trust's work.

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- Bruce said some people are intimidated by public process, and are more comfortable to express opinions in a private meeting.
- Ed said such meetings probably won't alleviate concerns, that Bruce will probably just be talked at and pressured to make commitments.
- Dan Cusher agreed that Bruce would likely be pressured to make commitments, and said it could result in more confusion and tension.
- Elisabeth said having a second person would mitigate that to a degree.
- Bruce asked for a straw poll:
 - Elisabeth said she supports it if two trustees go.
 - Eric was initially supportive but said that Dan Cusher made a good point that members of the public can say whatever they want about the meeting regardless of whether there are two trustees there, maybe no one on trust should meet with them outside of meetings.
 - Dan Cusher said the Trust shouldn't tell individuals they can't meet with constituents as individual members, but that the Trust shouldn't designate a representative for such meetings.
 - Ed said he's not going to say Bruce can't meet with constituents, but noted that these particular neighbors have spread a lot of misinformation into the community, and suggested that this shouldn't be Bruce's priority right now.
 - Curt agreed with Ed, saying that if Bruce decides to meet with them, he should set expectations at the beginning that he'll be listening only and cannot take any formal action or commit to anything. Curt said it may help them get things off their chests but he's not sure how productive it would be.
- Bruce said, based on the feedback from Trustees, that he would decline the invitation and try to do a better job coordinating the public meetings, perhaps bringing in the Trust's council and a consultant, to help with some informative sessions.

3. Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance of Meeting

a. Trustee terms

- Bruce said he had been in touch with the Town Clerk and Cindy Ide in the Town Administrator's office who made sure the Trustees' terms were updated correctly. All are two years and four are up for renewal on June 30 of this year. Bruce said the Select Board redid their appointment policy and have a new process, so trustees up for renewal should let Bruce know if they want to be reappointed and Bruce will pass that info along.

4. Adjournment

- a. Eric moved to adjourn. Ed seconded. Motion carried unanimously by roll call.**

Approved by the Affordable Housing Trust: August 12, 2021